
Derek SCOTT, *Musical Style and Social Meaning, Selected Essays*, and Stan HAWKINS (ed.) *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B Scott*

Keith Negus



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Notes de lecture - Dossier « Écoutes »

fine, c'est notre propre écoute que l'ouvrage ne cesse d'interroger. La richesse de ses sources, et la force heuristique de leur traitement, ouvrent ainsi *L'Oreille divisée* à une grande variété de

lectures (et de lecteurs) possibles. Ce qui suffit à en faire un ouvrage essentiel.

Jean-Claire VANÇON

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Notes

1. La question de l'interprétation n'est qu'effleurée, à l'occasion d'un texte de Giuseppe Maria Cambini (136-137).

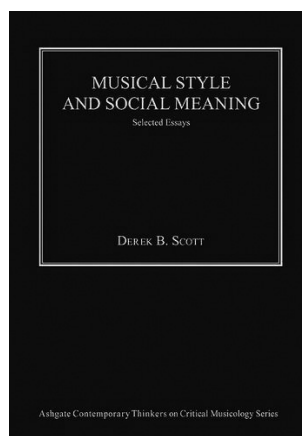
2. La notion décalquée de celle du « lecteur implicite » de Wolfgang Iser (1985).

Derek Scott, *Musical Style and Social Meaning, Selected Essays*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2010; Stan Hawkins (ed.), *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B Scott*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012.

Derek Scott was crucial to the establishment of critical musicology in the UK in the 1990s, a project he succinctly described as "a concern with critique, including the critique of musicology itself", an idea framing these two books, volumes that demonstrate his significant contribution to the theorising, study and teaching of music.

Critical musicology in the UK, like the so-called "new musicology" in the USA, was reacting against the perceived limitations of traditional musicology and responding to sociological critiques of the way that musicology had so often ignored social context and valorised an abstracted, apparently universal, formally complex type of absolute music whilst ignoring and devaluing

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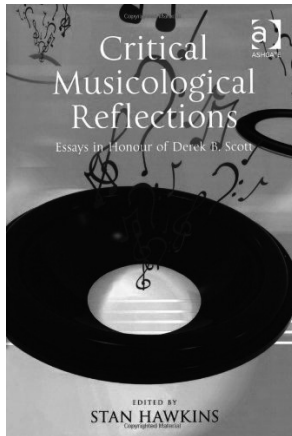
popular music. Critical musicology drew from the blend of critical theory and the identity politics posited by cultural studies, and arose out of some occasionally fraught encounters between sociologists and musicologists during the late 1980s and early 1990s. This context informs these two books, and the two volumes demonstrate how Scott, like a few other musicologists (appearing in the collection edited by Stan Hawkins), constructively responded to sociological calls for musicology to move beyond the text. His writing is idiosyncratic and engaging, characterised by an often wryly-ironic voice. The collection of his essays provides illuminating illustrations of this style, and the essays in his honour provide a critical engagement with his work that extends and elaborates on many of the themes that he has addressed in varied studies.

As Scott's work is probably familiar to many readers, and as there is not the space, and it would perhaps be tedious to go through the entire repertoire of each book, I shall use this space to map

out the key recurrent themes in Scott's research – themes that are never explored in a detached and abstract theoretical manner but always in an engaged and engaging, substantially researched style with fine attention to astutely chosen and fascinating illustrative details.

The first clear theme to emerge from these collections is the movement across the categories of popular/classical – a refusal of the binary divide whereby, as Simon Frith once noted, classical music (or the selective element of it taken to be "serious" music) was and often still is considered important because it is perceived to transcend social forces, whereas popular music was and is dismissed as of little value because it is deemed to be determined by social forces. Scott's work refutes this ideological schism and the accompanying assumption that absolute music is formally complex and structurally profound, whereas popular music is characterised by its superficial surface, its meanings obvious and trite. Not only do his writings move across and between varied repertoires, he is committed to analysing music that bridges or sits uncomfortably on the boundary between classical and popular. Here his writings on light music and easy listening are particularly illuminating.

A second theme is the stress on the social and cultural context of music making, circulation and reception (a challenge to the idea that music might have some privileged autonomous existence). The activities of popular musicians or composers or performers are never explored out of historical context, and Scott is attuned to the social conditions of music listening. Whilst he incorporates judicious arguments about race and gender, it is his writings about music and social class – still somewhat neglected in musicology,



despite their pervasive and pernicious impact – that I find most original and compelling. Discussing the class connotations and significations of vernacular song, along with Gilbert and Sullivan's operas, and the uneasy tensions of class and imperialism, Scott draws from a wide range of sociological sources (referencing Marx and Weber, Bourdieu, and Becker, Foucault and Baudrillard). There are frequent moments when the discussion is more comprehensive and nuanced than many articles about music that have appeared in sociological journals over recent years. It is an emphatic illustration of a musicologist who has embraced sociological critique in a way that has no parallel (Tia DeNora excluded) that I can think of within the disciplinary bunker of sociology where evading and avoiding musicology and questions of the musical work sits alongside a stubborn refusal to understand a few technical musical terms.

A third theme, linked to the above, is a concern with musical representation. Informed by Edward Said's work, Scott discusses how specific musi-

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cal motifs act to reproduce oppressive social relations (intentional or not), whether these entail "orientalism" or class stereotyping. He never reduces representation to semiotics, but shows how the meanings are produced and negotiated within specific social conditions and power relations. Here, his work on how western art music has represented others is compelling.

A fourth theme is perhaps more implicit and threads throughout his own collection of writings and, with varying degrees of application, across the book of essays in his honour. This entails a more subtle strategy of shifting the locus of musicology from being defined as a discipline to "an intertextual field of inquiry". This is not in any simple way an inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary project, but one that incorporates an open engagement with multiple texts through which musical meaning is mediated. It involves the critical use of the varied texts of music (scores, recordings, moving images) and scholarly writings, but it also involves a wider range of written documentary evidence, polemic, fiction and images that can be used to provide insight into music.

Now to my only real criticism, and it arises from a comparison of the production values that have informed each book. Hawkins's volume is impressively produced. It is framed by an extensive and astute essay by Stan Hawkins and structured to present a fluent, logically cohering argument about Scott's work. Great care and attention has gone into the visual appearance of the book. In contrast, Scott's introduction to his book is a rather brief understatement, merely summarising the contents. Maybe this is down to modesty, but the book is in a series grandly entitled "Contemporary Thinkers on Critical Musicology" and I was expecting something with a little more contem-

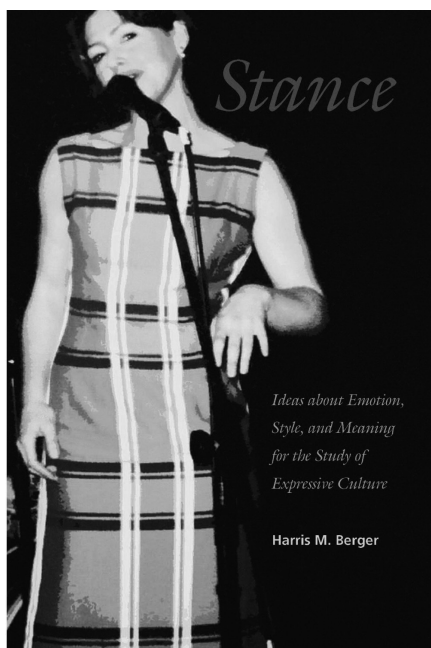
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porary bite and power. When sat alongside Hawkins's edited anthology, the collection of Scott's own writings is shoddy and casually produced. My copy is poorly manufactured, the front cover falling away from and not adhering very well to the rest of the book. More disappointingly, the chapters appear as a series of scanned or photocopied original articles – it resembles the cheap photocopied reading packs that we once gave to students for course study before it was so easy to

download articles. As the physical book as artefact comes under threat from various digital alternatives I find it a great shame that the publishers have not done this major thinker the honour of putting out a text with more deserved care and attention to detail. It is a shame that they have expended little effort on the visual appearance of the volume.

Keith NEGUS

Harris M. Berger, *Stance: Ideas About Emotion, Style, and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010.



Although reception is a central theme within Popular Music Studies, it is rare for research in this area to centre on the subjective quality of unfolding, lived experiences of music. In *Stance* Harris M. Berger invites scholars to reconsider processes of artistic creation and dissemination from a phenomenological perspective, highlighting reception as an intrinsically constitutive process, as opposed to one that involves “merely registering pre-existing forms and bestowing meaning upon them” (27). The processual nature of reception is described as an “active grappling” that influences both experienced meaning and perception (27). The subject matter of Berger’s book is inclusive, reflecting his scholarly involvement in the fields of popular music studies, ethnomusicology, folklore and performance studies; expressive, not merely auditory culture is his focus, including a range of examples from diverse array of activities such as music, dance, wrestling, film, novels, stand-up comedy as well as aspects of everyday life.